

## PLATE WITH HOLDER FOR WINE GLASS

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to dining ware, and more particularly to a plate having a holding receptacle for a glass.

#### BACKGROUD

A common problem encountered in the food service industry and, in particularl, at buffets and catered functions where seating areas are limited, is the difficulty of carrying both a plate supporting food items to be consumed and a glass or other liquid containing utensil. While it has been known to provide serving items, generally formed of paper, cardboard or plastic having defined areas for containing a liquid container such as a glass, such devices are often times unsightly, unsanitary, insecure, and difficult to handle.

Among solutions previously proposed are plate-like structures having either a recessed area or a raised rimmed area in which a liquid container can be placed. Due to various considerations such as cost and stacking of such servers, often the recessed area or raised rimmed area is inadequate to provide secure seating for the liquid container.

More recently plastic molded serving plates have been provided having an opening through a portion of the plate or tray, the opening generally dimensioned less than the dimension of the container, such as a wine glass, and the plate having a peripheral passageway into the opening such that the stem of a wine glass can be inserted through the passageway allowing the body of the wine glass to settle in the opening. While such structures afford greater security for the glass, tipping of the glass remains a problem and due to the plastic nature of the product, such devices are generally disposable and do not meet the requirements for higher end affairs where china is preferred.

It would therefore be an advance in the art to provide a plate made of china, porcelain, earthenware or the like materials having a secure glass holding section.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention provides a china plate having a standard central dished area (well) for holding food items with a raised outwardly extending rim or rim area. A portion of the rim area is provided with an opening therethrough dimensioned to cradle a glass, and in particular a stemmed wine glass. The opening may be defined by a raised rib projecting above the rim surface. The opening terminates at or adjacent a edge of the plate in a slot open to the glass cradling opening.

In an embodiment of the invention the raised rib surrounding the glass cradling opening is raised above the plane of the rim and is angled downwardly from the rim outer edge towards the recessed central food support well thereby providing a slight tilt to a wine glass cradled in the opening. Tilting of the wine glass, which is usually top heavy when substantially filled, aids in balancing the glass on the plate.

In an embodiment of the invention the plate is formed of earthenware, china or porcelain having a standard glaze or glazed appearance providing a sufficient friction between the glass and the rib or opening edge to assist in stabilizing a glass received in the glass cradling opening.

In an embodiment of the invention the plate is substantially circular having a standard dished central well and an outwardly and upwardly angled rim terminating in a curved edge. A slot opening which may be defined by ends of the raised rib lies substantially coplanar with the adjacent edge at the plate top surface. The plate rim angles inwardly and downwardly to a transition area or verge at the dished center at an angle greater than an inward and downward angle of the raised rib such that the rib increases in height with respect to the rim radially inwardly of the periphery.

In an embodiment of the invention the plate is substantially rectangular having a central rectangular dished area. The slot opening to the glass cradling opening is located along a side of the plate spaced from the plate corners. The rim is angled downwardly and inwardly towards a transition zone or verge to the dished center section and the raised rib is angled inwardly and downwardly at an angle less than the angle of the rim.

These and other features of the invention will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art from reference to the drawings and the following description of the preferred embodiments, in being understood that the shape, size and configuration of the plates may be varied from the disclosed preferred embodiment.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a top elevational view of a plate equipped with a glass holding opening of this invention.

Figure 2 is a side plan view of the plate in figure 1 illustrating by dotted lines interior configurations.

Figure 3 is an enlarged fragmentary section of the plate of figure 2 illustrating the glass receiving opening area.

Figure 4 is a view similar to figure 1 of a rectangular plate equipped with a glass holding opening of this invention.

Figure 5 is a side view of the plate of figure 4.

Figure 6 is an enlarged fragmentary sectional view of a portion of figure 5.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figure 1 illustrates a round plate 10 according to this invention having a central recessed food supporting surface 12 surrounded by a upwardly and outwardly extending verge area 13 to a rim 14 which extend outwardly terminating in an outer diameter edge 15. As shown in figure 2

the rim 14 is angled at 18 downwardly and inwardly towards the recessed central well 12. As described thusfar the plate 10 is substantially conventional.

The plate is preferably made of earthenware, porcelain or china and is glazed and fired in a normal fashion providing a surface 20 which is relatively smooth but which nonetheless exhibits a coefficient of friction generally standard for mass produced plates of such materials. In the preferred embodiment of this invention, the coefficient of friction of the surface treatment of the plate is sufficient to provide a less slippery surface particularly in the area of a raised rib 21 which may border a glass cradling opening 23. The opening 23 is preferably formed substantially entirely within the rim area and has a diameter sufficient to provide an opening 26 at the outer periphery edge 15 of the plate. If desired, the opening 26 could be formed as a short channel leading into a more inwardly positioned opening 23. Preferably the juncture of the opening 26 and the edge 15 at 28 is radiused to prevent a sharp edge. As shown in the encircled area designated 3 in figure 2 and enlarged in figure 3, the rim 14a in the area of the opening 23 may be thickened with respect to the remainder of the rim.

While dimensions of the plate and the opening may be modified as desired, one suitable plate may have a diameter of about 230 mm (nine inches), a rim width of approximately 40mm, a glass cradling opening 23 having a diameter of approximately 35mm with an opening 26 of approximately 15mm. The edge, as is known in the industry, may be rounded, having a edge height of approximately 5mm. The raised rib 21 may have a dimension of approximately 2mm in width in cross section and may have a maximum height projecting above the rim at the innermost point 31 of approximately 3mm.

As illustrated in figure 3, the rib 21 is angled inwardly and downwardly with respect to the plane 33 defined by the top of the periphery of the plate. As also shown in figure 3 the rim 14 is also inwardly and downwardly angled with respect to the plane 33 but to a greater extent than the rib 21. The rib 21 blends to the plane of the plate at the outer periphery of the plate

although, if desired, the rib can be raised slightly above the plane of the plate at the outer periphery adjacent the opening 26. The opening 26 is designed to freely receive the stem of a standard stem wine glass with the bowl of the wine glass projecting into the opening 23 a sufficient distance to provide stability for the glass. The angulation of the rib 21 provides a slight inward tilt to the top of the wine glass which is advantageous when carrying the plate, helping to prevent the glass from tipping out of the opening 26. It will be appreciated that the opening 26 may be made of a smaller dimension for plates designed to be used with thinner stemmed glasses.

If the rim is sufficiently thick, the raised rib may not be necessary and by angling the rim, the top of the opening 23 can provide the desired tilt to the wine glass.

The opening 23 can also provide a hanging point for the plate allowing plates to be suspended from a standard rod suspension 50 where a cylindrical rod is attached to the undersurface of a cabinet or the like, generally by the means of an intermediate support member 51 having a dimension less than the dimension of the opening 26, the rod having a larger dimension than the opening 26 and being freely accessible at one end. Thickening of that portion of the rim at 14a provides extra strength to the plate rim for such storage capability.

Figures 4 – 6 are similar to figures 1 – 3 showing a rectangular or square plate but illustrating a modification where the opening 23 and raised rib 21 extend into the verge 13 between the rim 14 and the central recessed well 12. If desired, the opening 23 and rib 21 could extend from the outer periphery edge 13 all the way to the area 12 or partially thereinto with the rib then forming a portion of the boundary wall of the central recessed food support surface.

Although I have described my invention with respect to preferred embodiments, it will be understood that many different configurations would be possible. Importantly, the plates could be larger, thicker and the rib defining the opening, taller. One specific variation is to taper the inside surface of the rib to provide an angled rib interior face substantially conically shown at 40

in figure 3 or to curve the inside face of the rib to thereby increase the surface contact between the outside of the glass at the rib and opening. This tapering or curvature can be extended through the entire thickness of the rim if desired, although it is preferred to radius the bottom of the wall of the opening 23 to eliminate sharp edges as well as to facilitate the manufacture of the plate. If the opening 23 is not provided with a boundary rib, the rim top edge of the opening may be curved.

Numerous additional alternatives will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art.